

Ecosystem Restoration

Program Component Update Ecosystem Restoration

Program Goals

The primary Program objective for ecosystem quality is to improve and increase aquatic and terrestrial habitats and improve ecological functions in the Bay-Delta system to support sustainable populations of diverse and valuable plant and animal species. A new set of goals for the program are proposed, and quantifiable objectives to meet those goals are being developed for the Ecosystem Restoration Strategic Plan.

Background

The Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) conducted workshops during late 1996 in Sacramento, Modesto, Walnut Grove, and Red Bluff to develop ERP goals and targets. Subsequently, CALFED released early review drafts of the three-volume ERP to the public during Summer 1997.

CALFED convened a Scientific Review Panel in October 1997, to review our approach to ecosystem restoration. At the conclusion of the review, the panel prepared formal comments and recommendation to CALFED regarding the need for clear goals and a strategic plan for restoration.

Volumes I and II of ERP were revised based largely on the public comment received and released as a technical appendix to the EIR/EIS in March 1998. Volume III was initially released as a draft working paper on the vision for adaptive management. Volume III was not revised nor released in March 1998. Instead, we prepared a short technical appendix "Developing a Strategic Plan for Ecosystem Restoration" in which we set a direction for a stakeholder driven process to develop a Strategic Plan.

In early 1998, a group of stakeholders developed a set of proposed goals for the strategic plan. The four goals follow:

- A. Achieve recovery of listed native species within the Delta and Suisun Bay, support recovery of listed native species in the Bay-Delta estuary and its watershed, and avoid the need for future endangered species listings.
- B. Rehabilitate the natural capacity of the Bay-Delta estuary and its watershed to support, with minimal ongoing human intervention, native aquatic and associated terrestrial biological communities.
- C. Maintain and enhance populations of selected species for safe consumption and sustainable commercial and recreational harvest consistent with goals A and B.
- D. Protect or restore a range of key, functional habitat types for biodiversity, scientific research, and other public values.

Program Description

The major activity of the ERP is the development of a strategic plan for ecosystem restoration. This broad implementation strategy will encompass the needs of the Ecosystem Restoration Program, Restoration Coordination Program, and the Conservation Strategy. This implementation strategy will be a programmatic level document. In Phase III this strategy will be used to refine the targets and actions identified in Volumes I and II of the ERP. This document will also be used to guide further development and implementation of the CALFED Conservation Strategy.

A team of six nationally-recognized scientists, the Core Team, will develop the plan with CALFED staff. The Core Team members are:

- Michael Healey, fisheries biologist, University of British Columbia
- Wim Kimmerer, expert in Bay-Delta plankton ecology and fisheries, San Francisco State University
- Matt Kondolf, hydrologist and fluvial geomorphologist, U.C. Berkeley
- Rod Meade, Endangered Species Act compliance and planning expert, R.J. Meade Consulting
- Peter Moyle, native fishes expert, U.C. Davis
- Bob Twiss, environmental planner, U.C. Berkeley

Important elements of the Strategic Plan include:

- ecological principles
- ecosystem attributes
- conceptual ecosystem models
- indicators of ecosystem health
- strategic goals
- ecosystem objectives
- implementation strategies
- adaptive management
- monitoring, and
- research

Issues/Concerns

- The drafting and review of elements of the Strategic Plan are a significant issue to many stakeholders.
- Recommended habitat acreages in the ERP are a significant issue.
- A comprehensive suite of indicators of ecological health should be developed to assess long-term success of restoration.
- There is a desire for continued independent scientific review.

Schedule

August 15, 1998: draft Strategic Plan
November 23, 1998: revised draft Strategic Plan
July 1, 1999: final Strategic Plan